Dear Mama and Papa,

I’m sorry that I haven’t had a chance to write much, things have been hectic. We’re living in New York right now. We came in through this place called Ellis Island and now we’re living in a community with a huge amount of other Italians; they make me feel safer somehow and more at home. It is really crowded here sometimes though, and I often fear that we may lose our apartment because we cannot always manage to pay on time. I know that you sent Antonio and me here in order to get away from the terrible conditions in Sicily and in order to have a brighter future, and America certainly is the land of opportunity—just not for us. We are not wanted here. The labor is hard. I am working in a flower factory; all day, every day we make fake flowers. I do not know where they end up; all I know is that I make the flowers the best that I can. Sometimes the forelady gets frustrated with me and threatens to take away my job, but I know that all she wants is better results, so I work harder. The older women told me one day that another young Italian girl like me was working in the same factory not too long ago and she simply dropped dead. This worries me, I do not know what she died of, but I cannot risk quitting and trying to find another job.

Antonio has been working construction. Right now he’s working on a railroad. He is very good at his work. You have taught us to be hard workers and, as a good construction worker, Antonio will *always* have a job. Antonio sometimes suggests that I marry. He thinks that, if I do, I will be able to have someone to take care of me when he’s not around. He even thinks that if I am married, I will not have to work and I will be able to simply cater to my family. He’s convinced that I could even find a way to further my education in my free time. I’m not so sure of his plan. Being a married woman is not as simple as it seems and I could never just leave Tony behind… we’re family.

Antonio and I are learning English. It’s difficult and not at all like Italian so it is slow-going. I told Tony that if we learn English we might be able to get better jobs. I start to realize now that we don’t have much extra time or extra energy for that sort of thing but we’re still trying. I think that the people here will accept us more if we seem a little bit more like them. I hear of a lot of violence against the immigrants. I’m not exactly worried though because the real violence has been happening more in the south.

Give everyone back in Sicily our regards!

Love Always,

Mary and Antonio



<http://www.charmingitaly.com/wp-content/uploads/women-fabbrica.jpg>

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